



For Immediate Release
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The 2015-16 Legislative Session: Part 1



- 1) **The Action is Inaction:** According to the Wisconsin Blue Book, February 18 is the earliest end date to a legislative session since 1970.
- 2) **State Finances are Unstable**
 - **Budget Gimmicks:** Last Spring, Republicans balanced a \$132 million shortfall in the 2013-2015 budget by delaying a \$108 million debt payment and raiding \$98 million from compensation reserves.
 - **Shrinking Wiggle Room:** The budget's projected ending net general fund balance of \$70.2 million is the lowest in 5 years.
 - **Spending More Than You Have:** The Republican budget is projected to spend \$148.8 million more in 2016-17 than the state will bring in.
 - **"Starving the Beast":** The next budget already starts with at least a \$130 million less in revenue than the current budget. This is because of reckless tax policy decisions made in the previous three budgets where the fiscal impact was intentionally delayed until the 2017-19 budget.
 - **Taxpayers are Subsidizing Voucher Students:** The state will pay \$258 million in the 2016-17 school year to voucher schools and \$600 to \$800 million could be diverted from public schools over the next ten years.
- 3) **Transportation Funding Failure**

Governor Walker and Republicans put off addressing Wisconsin's transportation funding crisis for the fifth straight year, relying instead on increased borrowing. Under Republican leadership, Wisconsin is now paying the highest amount of transportation debt service ever. The percentage of transportation revenue going to pay this debt service has *nearly doubled* since Governor Walker and the Republicans took control of the state. And debt payments are now growing faster than transportation revenue itself.

4) The Worst Economy in the Midwest

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released new quarterly jobs data showing Wisconsin now ranks 37th in private-sector job growth (8th out of 10 in the Midwest) over the past year covering June 2014 to June 2015. Wisconsin's job growth rate over that span is nearly half the national rate. The numbers also show that Wisconsin is 32nd (dead last in the Midwest) in private-sector job growth over the past four years covering June 2011 to June 2015. And last week, the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank announced that Wisconsin is one of only seven states that likely has a shrinking economy in spite of the growing national economy. This news is made worse by the fact that Wisconsin is one of the only states in that group that cannot attribute its sluggish performance to historically low oil prices.

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